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ABSTRACT

This paper defines Total Quality Management (TQM), discusses its origins, and identifies its strengths and weaknesses as they apply to higher education. The paper defines TQM as a philosophy of organizations that defines quality and improves organizational performance and administrative systems. The system originated from statistical quality control methods developed during the World War II. W. Edward Deming then convinced the Japanese that an emphasis on quality would produce benefits in productivity. Deming provided 14 principles designed from making quality a strategic advantage. Strengths of TQM for American higher education include increased employee participation and morale; better use of resources as a result of process analysis; increased cooperation across departments; enhanced solutions to problems; a common language applicable through an institution; and reduction in isolation. Various sources report that TQM weaknesses include the time and effort needed to implement the approach; leadership failure to understand TQM; lack of institutional commitment; frustration with teamwork; and limited ability to deal with larger issues like budget cuts and the challenges of multiculturalism. The paper concludes that many colleges and universities are using TQM, and that if barriers are removed, it could well serve higher education. (Contains 11 references.) (JB)

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THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

BY

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AN INDEPENDENT STUDY FOR ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION

FOR

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I. INTRODUCTION

Cornesky (1991) asserts that many of the problems faced by American Higher Education can be attributed to the lack of vision, insight, and skills of its administrators, who lack both formal and informal management training. In many instances, these problems can be also be attributed to the lack of top level leadership. The author contends that responsibility must be placed on top level administrators, since they have conformed to the pressures of the present rather than making a commitment to quality in an effort to prepare for the future. As it appears, college and university administrators have seemingly diverted their attention from the purpose of producing quality education to maintaining the status quo. Chaffee and Sherr (1992) state that although we might "be for quality", in many eyes, we do not "do quality." Therefore, this must become a major focus in the delivery of services in American Higher Education.

In the years to come, college administrators can make significant changes in the delivery of institutional services by implementing a Total Quality Management (TQM) philosophy. As Mangan (1992) points out, this industrial management philosophy is working it way into academe. Total Quality Management has proven to be beneficial to colleges and universities throughout the United States, and has directed these institutions toward Total Quality Improvements (TQI).

Cornesky (1991) contends that institutions of higher education are now being encouraged to implement the TQM philosophy as

directed by the following authorities: W. Edward Deming, Phillip Crosby, Joseph Juran, and Masaaki Imai. As indicated, by implementing TQM, institutions of higher education will have: "(1) constructive competition; (2) shared values and unity of purpose; (3) collaboration on broad issues; (4) simultaneous and synergistic planning; (5) emphasis on responsibility to contribute; (6) decentralized partnerships built upon situational management; (7) team accountability; (8) win-win resolution to conflicts via conflict management; (9) and probably most important, a superior professorate, student body, and administration. In summary, organizational cultures will be transformed" (p 9).

For the purpose of this paper, this writer will (1) define Total Quality Management; (2) discuss the origin of Total Quality Management; and (3) identify the strengths and weaknesses of Total Quality Management as they apply to higher education.

II. WHAT IS TQM ?

Chaffee and Sherr (1992) assert that TQM is a philosophy of living and working in organizations that emphasize the pursuit of continuous improvement. As Marchese (1991) points out, it is a call for leadership; a forum on quality; customer driven; a philosophy of making processes work better; an extension of mindset; and training and recognition. As the authors contend, its focus is to define quality, and improve organizational performance and the administrative system. As further pointed

out, its purposes are to improve quality, increase productivity, and decrease costs.

III. ORIGIN OF TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT

Heverly (1992) tells us that TQM was originally used by Japanese companies in an effort to achieve and maintain a competitive edge. Consequently, many believe that TQM began with the Japanese, but it actually began with American and British statisticians who, according to the author, developed statistical quality control methods to support Allied efforts during World War II. Following the war, W. Edward Deming convinced the Japanese that an emphasis on quality would produce benefits in productivity. As Marchese (1991) reports, Deming also provided fourteen principals designed for making quality a strategic advantage. Schargel (1991) suggests that these principals are as follows: (1) create consistency of purpose for improvement of products and services; (2) adopt the new philosophy; (3) cease dependence on mass inspection; (4) end the practice of awarding business on price tag alone; (5) improve constantly and forever the system of production and service; (6) institute training; (7) institute leadership; (8) drive out fear; (9) break down barriers between staff areas; (10) eliminate slogans, exhortations, and targets for the workforce; (11) eliminate numerical quotas; (12) remove barriers to pride of workmanship; (13) institute a vigorous program of education and retaining; and (14) take action to accomplish the transformation.

The Japanese learned these principals, and in 1954 turned their attention to the works of Joseph Juran, who emphasized "management for quality," and to the writing of Phillip Crosby, called "Quality Is Free." As the author further indicated, in the 1980's, American industries devoured the concept of quality and TQM and made it the emphasis of productivity. Its seven criteria--Leadership, Information and Analysis, Planning, Human Resources Utilization, Quality Assurance, Quality Results, and Customer Satisfaction--served to provide a consensus statement of TQM values. In 1988, Federal Express recognized service transactions as the heart of its business. Employee involvement, training, and education were deemed to be responsible for the success of its service. As the author contends, customers value products that work, in addition to service that is prompt and dependable. Thus, TQM possesses the necessary components to deliver such demands.

IV. STRENGTHS

There are a significant number of advantages to implementing the TQM philosophy into American Higher Education. As Mangan (1992), Seymour (1991), Heverly (1992), and McMillen (1991) point out, TQM gives people a voice and enhances morale. Involving people in the decision-making process and improving the quality of their work environment provides them with a sense of valve and purpose. As reported, it changes attitudes, which in turn affects the climate of an institution, division, or department.

As the authors further suggest, involving people is what makes TQM a powerful philosophy. DeCosmo, Parker, and Heverly (1991) suggest that TQM offers a paradigm that encourages effective participation. Everyone must be free to pursue quality, to work together, and to listen.

Heverly (1992), and DeCosmo, Parker, & Heverly (1991) contend that TQM provides a better use of resources, which comes as a result of studying processes. The authors assert that it identifies and removes unnecessary steps, work repetition, and errors. Consequently, this process saves time, money, and other resources.

TQM also increases cooperation across departments. According to the authors, accomplishments cannot be achieved unless "owners and operators" of a process are working together. Seymour (1991) claims that these accomplishments require a coordinated effort by those who have knowledge of extended processes.

Heverly (1992) further reports that TQM enhances solutions to problems. It focuses on causes rather than symptoms, which leads to solutions that are not based on general opinions. As well, planning in the TQM process increases employee awareness of the institution's mission. As Heverly (1992) and Mangan (1992) state, planning allows staff members to become aware of how their job tasks relate to the mission of the institution.

Seymour (1991) and McMillen (1991) assert that TQM provides a common language which provides universal principles that are applicable throughout an institution of higher education. As

reported, this language becomes most evident in confronting situations. Consequently, staff members are able to share frustrations without involving personalities. Additionally, it provides a freedom in which staff members express opinions without fear of reprimand.

The authors contend that TQM allows staff members to know what they are about. Just as people become isolated in institutions of higher education, ideas can also become lost within departments or divisions. Therefore, the importance of vision becomes a key concept in TQM. Vision energizes and provides institutions with goal oriented tasks.

As Seymour (1991) and McMillen (1991) point out, TQM principles increases efficiency (improve time) and effectiveness, which in turn saves money. According to McMillen (1991), administrative officials at Oregon State University concur. Following their adopted approach to quality control regarding customer services, O.S.U. was able to save money, reduce paper work, and simplify operational procedures throughout divisions of the university. DeCosmo, Parker, and Heverly (1991) report that at Delaware County Community College where TQM has also been implemented, effectiveness became a major issue. Thus, the focus was placed on continuous improvement in programs and services.

The authors also assert that competition for students will continue to increase as the number of traditional students decline. As competition becomes more intense, only those institutions which meet the needs of students *as customers* will

survive. Institutions which have adopted TQM principals will embrace the credibility needed to protect their goods and services.

As a result of TQM, many colleges and universities pay more attention to problem solving techniques. DeCosmo, Parker, and Heverly (1991) contend that attention is placed on collecting data, applying analytical tools, and pilot-testing actions prior to implementation. The authors further assert that by applying TQM, staff members actually involve one another in a process of documenting and standardizing college operating procedures. More importantly, they begin to view one another as customers.

V. WEAKNESSES

Heverly (1992) points out that the benefits or strengths to TQM require overcoming its barriers or weaknesses. Heverly (1992) and Seymour (1991) contend that the implementation of TQM takes too much time and effort. Practitioners must be trained, the philosophy assimilated and taught, decisions must be reached, and time is needed to implement a new work procedure and a way of thinking. Seymour (1991) points out that training efforts are slow, and involving new people takes away from their jobs. According to the author, it takes time to find opportunities to discover a new way of thinking, while the old way continues to produce problems. Heverly (1992) contends that TQM teams often identify frustrations as a result of the time needed to gather data and analyze solutions. Seymour (1991) asserts that the

decision making process takes longer because the teams must meet a consensus.

As reported, TQM requires a change in organizational culture and tradition. Heverly (1992) contends that because it takes years to implement, in addition to being an ongoing process, TQM requires patience to accomplish cultural change.

Seymour (1991) says that TQM is more than lip service. The president and other top level administrators often fail to understand quality mechanisms, commitment and its understanding, and to operate from specific plans. Administrators must recognize that hard work is required for a quality transformation. Additionally, leadership is essential. As Winter (1991) point out, without top level support, many institutional leaders appear reluctant to embrace the TQM philosophy.

Winter (1991) suggests that colleges and universities fail to involve staff development of its employees. Consequently, the expertise and effectiveness of employees are undermined and thus, attitudes are affected. The lack of attention then becomes another indication of a lack of institutional commitment.

As Seymour (1991) asserts, teamwork can also be accompanied by a great deal of frustration. As reported, colleges and universities are often decentralized into isolated departments whereby faculty and staff members have little or no experience with working in teams. Although TQM can bring people together, teams can often be ineffective because they are inexperienced,

too large, or not effectively composed of members who can make sound decisions.

The author also contends that quality management has little to do with bottom-line results. It has significant benefits, but they are difficult to quantify, or to identify directly. While some improvements may be obvious, those who are skeptical require more tangible results.

Total Quality Management cannot escape the impact of unexpected or uncontrollable events such as budget cuts. Heverly (1992) asserts that other crises may include sudden demands from funding agents, or a turnover of key staff who helped to implement TQM philosophies. As reported, these events compound the problems of time constraints and competing demands.

Marchese (1991) points out that while TQM addresses many important issues affecting higher education, it does not address the tougher problems of higher education--the implications of multiculturalism, assessment as it relates to the central issues of student learning, sagging public support, and inept administrators.

VI. CONCLUSION

From the review of the literature, it appears that the philosophy of Total Quality Management is being used in dozens of colleges and universities throughout the nation. As barriers to instituting the TQM philosophy in other institutions are removed, the use of TQM will better serve American Higher Education to

increase quality, improve effectiveness, reduce costs, and conserve resources.

Of the colleges and universities that are using the TQM philosophy, it is evident that all of these institutions are not doing so in order to become effective, but rather as a result of governmental pressures, limited resources, and a reduction in clientele. Despite these primary motives, though, top level administrators must become committed to the philosophy, customers, and the future of the institution before they can actually adopt TQM management principles for the work place.

Chaffee and Sherr (1992) assert that an institution making a transformation to TQM signifies two basic changes: (1) that no matter how good an institution is, it can continuously improve, and (2) that an institution can be committed to always finding ways to increase quality and decrease cost. Such an implementation would require cultural changes. Yet, the process can indeed become a reality.

Perhaps the best conclusion is one given by Seymour (1991), following a survey taken by persons in higher education institutions using TQM management principles: "we find that we stumble a lot, consult a lot, and finally manage to achieve our objective...isn't that the way of all learning?" (p 18).

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